

MS. BASTABLE: Thank you so much for -- to the BLM for hosting this hearing and allowing an opportunity for everyone to weigh in on the PEIS [indiscernible]. My name is Clare Bastable, and I'm from Garfield County, Colorado. I'm here on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation, which has 6 million members and supporters across the nation, including a million hunters and anglers. I'm also personally here on behalf of my nine-month-old daughter. I want to comment on wildlife considerations in this PEIS process and steps that need to be taken in order to ensure that our wildlife habitat and public lands can remain intact.

Hunting, angling, and other forms of outdoor recreation are fundamental to our Colorado lifestyle and the lifestyle of the West. They drive a \$646 billion economy nationwide.

I wanted to outline three key changes that I think are needed to the coal program to protect wildlife habitat and sporting opportunities in Colorado and the West. First, we need to change mining reclamation practices.

Out of a total of 450 square miles of mined lands across Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota alone, only 46 square miles, or around 10 percent of these lands, have been fully reclaimed. Lack of adequate reclamation presents significant

threats to the 300 species in the [indiscernible] and the future of our backcountry experiences and those of future generations.

Second, related to this, OSM needs to end self-bonding practices. Recent bankruptcies have left behind \$3.6 billion in self-bonding liability to taxpayers.

Communities simply cannot afford to take on this liability.

And third, the royalty rate needs to be modernized; and a portion of funds from royalty rates should be used to mitigate impacts of mining on wildlife and its habitat. The BLM has no easy task, as it sets out to appropriately modernize its Coal Leasing Program.

The changes to reclamation standards, self-bonding practices, and royalty levels and allocations will be critical to protecting wildlife habitat and our sporting traditions as we plan for our energy future, the future of our Colorado communities, and the future of my nine-month-old daughter. Thank you.

MS. PATTERSON: Thank you. Now, we will have group 26 through 30 come down to microphone 2 to see Blake. And we

will move over to microphone number 1 with number 21.

MR. SMITH: How you guys doing today? My name is Casey. I'm a geologist with Arch Coal. First and foremost, you know, thank you for the opportunity for providing comments for the PEIS scoping process.

It was just about a year ago I stood in Denver presenting feedback at a listening session on how BLM should best carry out their responsibilities to ensure that the American taxpayers receive a fair return on the Federal coal leases.

Again, I'm here to echo those four principles to guarantee a successful Coal Leasing Program. Is, number 1, is promote the mining of Federal coal in the West, rather than suppressing the demand with more costly regulations and policies.

Unfortunately most major coal companies are already in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings. My question for you is how can an increase in a royalty percentages possibly ensure that Federal coal leases are being utilized at the benefit of the taxpayers?

Which brings me to number 2 is wouldn't it make more sense to consider lowering royalty rates to a level in which Federal coal remains competitive with the private lease market?

A comparative pricing market will generate more revenue in the form of sales, bonus bids, for the taxpayers; rather than driving the market price to private leases and unfortunately abroad.

Number 3 is BLM should reassess the efficiency and streamline the Federal Coal Leasing Program and remove any unwarranted delays in the leasing process that are financially hurting the return to the taxpayers. And then, number 4, BLM should reorganize and reconvene the Royalty Policy Committee that was disbanded so long ago and include a group represented by the public and private sector.

Look, coal production has been in my bloodline for multiple generations. And I've seen it fuel thousands of American dreams.

But, even though I'm young in my career and early in my career, I've worked in almost every major coal basin here in the United States. But, even in my short stay in the coal industry, I've witnessed this bombardment of regulations and policies from Federal and State agencies.

I guarantee that raising the royalty percentages and/or slowing this leasing process with more regulation in

today's depressed coal market, will suppress the demand of coal on Federal leases and is an economic trap with the implications of a possibility of initial terms with no regards to sustainability.

I encourage those who will be working through these comments and ensuring that they are addressed in the PEIS to reach out to the individuals in the industry and public interest groups that are represented here today who are intimate with royalties, leasing, and these environmental issues, like the geologist who is standing here today. And thank you.